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PRISTINE MODERNITY

(THE HISTORY OF WOMEN BY MEN I-II.)

On the phylogenetic background of gender stereotypes

Absztrakt

Az alább ismertetett történeti analízistől azt vártam, általa áttekinthetővé válik, hogy a közgondolkodók kinyilatkoztatásai nyomán mely sztereotípiák alapján értelmeződött a nő és a férfi fogalma, s az tipológiailag hogyan szerveződött sztereotípiává. Valamint, hogy mára mi maradt meg közülük a nyilvános és a magán-kommunikációs térben. A nemek hierarchikus viszonyát szövegeken keresztül és a közeg kritikai szemléletű megközelítésével vizsgáltam.

Abstract

Below described historical analysis is intended to provide a generic overview of how the notions of women and men were interpreted according to the stereotypes based on revelations of public thinkers; how these typologically formulated into stereotypes. And to what extent these are still present in public and private communication spaces. The hierarchical gender relationships are analyzed through texts, with critical approach towards the medium.

The basic assumption of the analysis is, that from a socio-philosophical approach, social order and its supporting theories were established based on androcentric principles.¹ It was of crucial importance to create such functional and provisional spheres that ensured the control over the subordinate groups. Social communication and information technology served as means for manipulating public events, determining the opinion-shaping effects of open discourses and for institutionalizing dominance.²

Resources

The research used classic theories and books of contemporary male thinkers as historical resources.

The chosen texts were required to be works of well known, relevant thinkers, whose works or public discourses discussed gender roles, or whose theories or views dealt with females, though remaining ultimately male-centric (eg. Plato, Aristotle, etc...).

Goals

The primary objective of this work is a critical interpretation of the historical correspondence and the social media of the discourses, analyzing the socio-philosophical effects of the female-related revelations, thus drafting the processes that lead to the establishment of gender stereotypes.

Methodology

The subject matter of the discussion required a careful choice of the correct methodology for the analysis of the historical background. The method that arose in the 1990's for the investigation of the mechanisms that created and sustained stereotypes seemed adequate at first, but preliminary studies of the discourses proved that the influence of the androcentric approach that penetrated the history of womankind is so strong even nowadays, that it should definitely be dealt with a critical approach. As a result, I focused on the assumption of above detailed critical discourse analysis, that the CDA evaluates the texts in the broader context of power relations (dominance, inequality, social background).³

Feminist discourse analyses focus mostly on the language critical position of the already established power relations (eg. deficit – dominance – difference), neglecting the historical reasons for their development (Lakoff, Tannen, Fishman). This phase of the analysis is thus consistently aiming the introduction of a socio-philosophical and communication-oriented perspective.

1 Hell 2002:322.

2 Nagl-Docekal 2006:21-49.

3 van Dijk 1994; Wodak 2008.

The Analysis

I conducted a detailed investigation of the ancient conditions, especially the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, when the classic elements of gender stereotypes were formed. Regarding matriarchy, I used the conclusions of ethnographic, anthropologic and art history researches as references, complemented with contemporary descriptions of the social structures of still existing matriarchal societies (eg. Morgan, Blackwood). Conclusions of more modern thinkers were discussed according to certain periods of feminism and their critical analysis (eg. first medieval rebels as the first feminist, the 1980's and the double standard of sexual morality, etc...).

Present phase of the analysis aims to describe the discursive fields that developed around such revelations, in other words, who wrote what and why, and how these influenced genders, especially the adjudication of women. My goal was to present the relevant characteristics of the eras when the revelations were said or written. Conclusions are included in the interpretation phase of the discourses.

The historical analysis was expected to clarify what stereotypes formed the notions of women and men based on the revelations of public thinkers, how these typologically formulated into stereotypes, and to what extent these are still present in public and private communication spaces. These were later investigated from the aspect of analyzing language stereotypes.

From Matriarchy to Patriarchy

When comparing matriarchy and the later established patriarchy, it is essential to evaluate the aspect of power, especially that of proprietorship. The historical partition of the ancient matriarchal social order happened presumably in the era of the Greek polis society, supposedly due to the deterioration of above mentioned values.⁴ The introduction

4 The Etruscan society was matriarchal and exogenous; the right of succession did not belong to male ascendants. With the death of Tarquinius; however, the notions of land- and private ownership, family and patriarchy slowly penetrated into society. Women in the Roman Empire had a more difficult situation than in greek societies: they were subordinate to wealth, considered as „means” for gaining and trading properties, without any protection from family rights, unable to take part in public affairs to vindicate their rights.

of primogeniture initiated the patriarchal, paternal (Sun) era with unconditional male dominance that is identified as the foundation of modern civilization. Matriarchy was destroyed by the ideal state as defined by Plato. Critiques of his work were later evaluated by a contemporary pro-matriarchy researcher (Grandpierre 1992) as follows:⁵

„As barbaric tribes misinterpret the key notions of the high-culture they destroyed, either for not being able to understand its real coherences, or for deliberately wanting to humiliate it, so will the central idea of magical activities less and less articular”.

For Plato, accompanying each other for welfare was a dictate of common sense. His basic assumption was, that everyone is born with different skills and values – „that they are full of spirit almost as soon as they are born, whereas some of them never seem to attain to the use of reason, and most of them late enough”⁶ – accordingly, everyone has to fulfil an appropriate social role. As Plato continues:

„Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron...”

Plato suggested getting the job done in smaller communities. He ordered the apportionment of goods, so that the co-dependence of the people in the community would result in an enhanced moral of co-operation; such as the different organs of the body, the community is also functioning as one organic unit. This concept resembled in many respects to matriarchy; however, at this point without involving the ultimate goal of power – that is prosperity. With time, the community would grow bigger, and Plato also had to be more realistic:⁷

„(...) But if you wish also to see a State at fever-heat, I have no objection. For I suspect that many will not be satisfied with the simpler way of life. They will be for adding sofas, and tables, and other furniture; also dainties, and perfumes, and incense, and courtesans, and cakes, all these not of one sort only, but in every variety; we must go beyond the necessities

5 Ibid as above. /A klasszikus Arisztotelész-fordítás részletei H.W.C Davis 2008-as fordításából valók, *The Great Source of Revolution* c. fejezet, 190. oldal/.

6 Plato 2001. book IV:72.

7 Plato, ibid, 50.

of which I was at first speaking, such as houses, and clothes, and shoes: the arts of the painter and the embroiderer will have to be set in motion, and gold and ivory and all sorts of materials must be procured”.

As he wanted to put an end to uneven acquisition of power and wealth, he also detailed the egalitarian adjudication of women and men. Unlike the dominant stereotypes of posterior patriarchal systems, he positioned women as being more or less equal to men. Though there is no significant differentiation between male and female features in his patriarchal republic-theory, Plato considered equality within the frames of economic rationality (eg. guards). In his opinion, removing one half of the community from common duties was not beneficial, moreover, as active members of the community, it was not sufficient for women to do houseworks and parenting only. As a consequence, he asked the question that seems so familiar: Is it good and beneficial to involve women into governmental duties:⁸

– *Is female nature the same as that of males or is it different?*

– *Do these features mean natural born or acquired skills?*

– *Do women have the same capabilities as men?*

Aristotle and gender hierarchy

The dissolution of matriarchy was followed by the polis society, where Plato did not doubt the equality of women and men – he even considered the interchange of gender roles (eg. parenting) as a possible. Though the ideas of matriarchy were wanly present in his discourse, with time, students were less and less likely to follow the ideology of the precious order. As the hierarchy of intellect and emotions got widespread, the *leader/man/intellect* concept became superior to the artificially downgraded *desire/woman/emotion* stereotype. (Theoretical identification of women and men, the endeavor towards gender equality only appeared in the XIX–XX. century again).

Plato’s student, Aristotle, however, followed a more radical path regarding the questions of men

and women – he openly opposed, for instance, the female-children related joint estate system as described in *The Republic* – and his gender paradigm evolved into a determining factor of European culture. Modern social gender relations most likely originate from this theory as well, implying that men should be active in the power- and wealth-oriented spheres, where as women should remain servants in the background spheres. Below quoted discourses were publicly performed, having an inestimably negative effect on women, as rhetors’ statements were widespread by pundits without any criticism from the audience. Most quotes are taken from Aristotle’s work *Politics*. Aristotle’s statements on genders were not as thorough and accurate as his spiritual heritage in all other fields. Male dominance was assumed a priori, and his experience justifying its premises were published without contraindications. The universality of such theories had never been doubted throughout the following centuries either. When describing social order, he claimed: republic is a community or association of men and women, citizens and servants, whose relationship is at all levels mutual; however, a quality-based distinction must be made.⁹

„Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.

Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master”.

Aristotle took the subordinate status of women as a kind of natural hierarchy, thus excluding female vindication from politics. According to his theory, men and woman cannot be equal due to their *original* nature that is a natural born essence. Guidance over women was a *political* need, and in his view, this division supported and promoted social functionality. He made, however, a distinction between guidance over women and that of over children. Latter was considered superior to the other, for its lovefulness and the justifying power of the elderly (parent). This later lead to the essentialist theory that differentiated between female and male brains: the male intellect vs. female emotions, and the virtue vs. sin as exclusive binary gender opposi-

8 Aristotle, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Spinoza – they all used the term „human nature”, though with various meaning. Above questions focus on diversity, and the basic assumption of the approach determines the investigation of the significant elements (eg. is mind a part of human nature at all?)

9 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1994:5.

tions.¹⁰ Aristotle made a distinction regarding morals as well:

„...the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying”.¹¹

The creation of the man-woman contradistinction and the description of their hierarchical relationship were also based on these thoughts, that later became the doctrine for feminist criticism.¹² The abstraction of the contradictory oppositions, such as body and mind, form and material, good and bad, valuable and worthless, light and dark, all became fundamentals of male-female relationship-system as positive or negative categories, formulating a determining logos of gender interactions. All this was completed by the essentialist statement that: „For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female (...)”.¹³ The so established social gender order was taken as a universal axiom. Aristotle:

„If, however, there be some one person, or more than one, although not enough to make up the full complement of a state, whose virtue is so pre-eminent that the virtues or the political capacity of all the rest admit of no comparison with his or theirs, he or they can be no longer regarded as part of a state; for justice will not be done to the superior; if he is reckoned only as the equal of those who are so far inferior to him in virtue and in political capacity. Such as one may truly be deemed a God among men”.¹⁴

From a female point of view, the so constituted gender hierarchy can be interpreted as a polarized hierarchical system, such as aristocracy, where a

chosen group of people rules over the other group. In case of gender aristocracy – unlike in case of the limited number of members in the classical aristocracy – the number of rulers more or less equals to that of the subordinates (men and women). The idea, that the constitutional dependency, subordination and infantilization of women served common wealth, was used as justification, though being contradictory to the fundamentals of the actual paradigm, democracy. Aristotle explains:

„It must not be assumed, as some are fond of saying, that democracy is simply that form of government in which the greater number are sovereign (...) Therefore we should rather say that democracy is the form of government in which the free are rulers”.¹⁵

Socrates was more permissive than Aristotle when dealing with male-female virtues. In his discourse, the difference between the virtues of men and women are only proportional and not qualitative. His milder opinion was supported by the fact that he was willing to give women the right to participate at public meals, a privilege of those in power. Aristotle, however, opposed all privileges and ideas in connection with equality, for that would lead to an overly familiarized state. He continued to hold on to his idea, that women are „the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony”.¹⁶

Male-centered mentality got widespread and stabilized. Aristotle explained the occurrence of the seldom and moderate rebellions of women in the background as follows:

„The universal and chief cause of this revolutionary feeling has been already mentioned; viz., the desire of equality, when men think that they are equal to others who have more than themselves; or, again, the desire of inequality and superiority, when conceiving themselves to be superior they think that they have not more but the same or less than their inferiors; pretensions which may and may not be just. Inferiors revolt in order that they may be equal, and equals that they may be superior”.¹⁷

In his understanding, dissatisfaction and discordance are results of the endeavor for profit and prestige, which implies, to some extent, either gaining more or preserving the existing powers. All disagreement issues in aristocracy are consequences

10 The concepts of *man* and *woman* were originally created to record the different physical features according to the distinctive primary and secondary biological gender features. As a result, when discussing social gender roles, the notions of eg. male and female duties originally carried an entirely different, complex background meaning. This assumption implies numerous dilemmas, eg.: if, according to the stereotype, male duties are more valuable than female jobs, the quality of the worker becomes limited, creating a power hierarchy without considering skills and real results. See Nagl-Docekal 2006:175-184.

11 Ibid, Book II.

12 Aristotle: *ibid*, and Aristotle – *Metaphysics*. Nagl-Docekal 2006:175-195.

13 Aristotle, Book I. Section 9b.

14 Book III. Section 4a.

15 Ibid, Book IV. k. section 4.

16 Ibid.

17 Book V. section 2a.

of the dissatisfaction of the parties displaced from ruling powers, when receiving an important leading function remains the privilege of the top few of the ones that have the aptitude. After a while, the constitution amends in favor of the ones who demand change, so the rebels finally reach their goals. Such a result; however, cannot be a triumph for women, as Aristotle described an eventual female authority as an extremity of democracy:

„Again, the evil practices of the last and worst form of democracy are all found in tyrannies. Such are the power given to women in their families in the hope that they will inform against their husbands, and the license which is allowed to slaves in order that they may betray their masters; for slaves and women do not conspire against tyrants; and they are of course friendly to tyrannies and also to democracies, since under them they have a good time. For the people too would fain be a monarch, and therefore by them, as well as by the tyrant, the flatterer is held in honor; in democracies he is the demagogue; and the tyrant also has those who associate with him in a humble spirit, which is a work of flattery”.¹⁸

As for mastery and agreement, he indeed drafted a solution, describing a method applicable in gender hierarchy in case of an eventual gender democracy as dysfunction:

„(...) For the actions of a ruler cannot really be honorable, unless he is as much superior to other men as a husband is to a wife, or a father to his children, or a master to his slaves. And therefore he who violates the law can never recover by any success, however great, what he has already lost in departing from virtue. For equals the honorable and the just consist in sharing alike, as is just and equal. But that the unequal should be given to equals, and the unlike to those who are like, is contrary to nature, and nothing which is contrary to nature is good”.¹⁹

Silence remained a woman's glory, whereas the same feature meant dysfunction among males, as „he would seem as immature as an unknowing child”.²⁰

In summa

The adjudication of matriarchy is rather ambivalent. In spite of contemporary states with similar social structures, its existence is only dealt with in connection with matrilineal succession. In the so called classic matriarchy, power and authority belong to women. Their privileged position is an automatic and practically present structure, forming a solid base for subsistence and race preservation. Matriarchy in ancient and modern times is described as a hierarchical formula without an aggressive executive force, not dominated by violence and forceful collection of material goods. A society, where crime and abuse are unknown notions, there are no state institutions for authority enforcement and no central religious organizations.

According to patriarchal principles, the idea of a *non-male master or leader* has been considered as heresy in both public and private life. From the aspect of gender relations, ever since the dissolution of matriarchy, potent candidates for above mentioned virtues (requirements) could exclusively be men. The terminology of men or people referred only for the male, women and mothers, who did play a significant role in the creation of the nation, were excluded. Women and children were ranked as property items of the men.

Social order and hierarchical subordination relations were defined according to the way power was practiced – in ancient societies, in order to become a *full citizen*, the only requirement was to be born a male, in the census, it was enough to certify citizen origin through three or four generations.

Besides origin and properties, education also became a privilege, thus with the exclusion of women, that served the establishment of a kind of *gender aristocracy*, with the male being exclusively eligible for power.

As a conclusion, an important state-organizational dilemma may arise: in modern democracy, can the system of female rights and equality be based on an ancient structure, where the significant *other (female) half* of the community was simply not allowed to represent themselves in public life equally and in a rightful proportion?

18 V. section XI.

19 VII. Section III.

20 Morus 1989:65.

The History of Women by Men II.

Pristine modernity

The similarities between the gender stereotypes of Aristotle's era and the modern negative adjudication of women are striking when examining developments from the antiquity till modern times. Below drafts are to compare female roles of ancient patriarchy with the expectations drawn by modern academic public thinkers (economic-sociological statements by Weber and Tönnies, ethical studies by Simmel and Foucault and general ethical paradigm-strengthening statements by Comte-Sponville). The texts show improvements of erudition and language, but stability of the male aspect, considering power, its aggressive expression as a 'priority male virtues, further solidifying social gender roles. Quotations here are not to criticize these aspects, but to describe the female position and its motionlessness, proving that gender preconceptions remained the same even thousands of years after Aristotle.

Max Weber discussed the stations of the establishment and consolidation of patriarchy in his work, *Economy and Society*. He made a distinction between the notions of *community* and *society*, and he defined social acts per their subjective value. By differentiating between these two basic segments he again used facts known from antique democracy, and though he was referring to it many times, he never acknowledged the existence of any economically and sociologically valuable social order prior to patriarchy (matriarchy).²¹ Weber compared the legal equality of the sexes to the Spartan enforced-order; for instance, when women and mother were leading the households while the men were at war – which is; in his opinion, incompatible with patriarchal principles:²²

„It is the fundamental basis of loyalty and authority, which in turn is the basis of many other groups. This 'authority' is of two kinds: (1) the authority de-

21 This again brings us to the question: according to Weber, within what interval can tradition be evaluated, and based on what can it be considered genuine? For instance, can the androcentric social order, as defined by Plato and Aristotle, be considered authentic or legitimized, based on the fact that it was established by the artificial creation of the polis-societies, with complete ignorance of matriarchal traditions – in other words, with no antecedents at all?

22 Weber 1992:58-65.

rived from superior strength; and (2) the authority derived from practical knowledge and experience. It is, thus, the authority of men as against women and children; of the able-bodied as against those of lesser capability; of the adult, as against the child; of the old as against the young”.

He believed that the only *primitive* social grouping form was the family formula based on lasting sexual union: the grouping of father, mother and child. According to his study, the grouping of mother and children must be regarded as the most real and natural sort of family, as the mother takes care of the children as long as they are unable to nurture themselves.²³ Weber was positive about the notions of *house, household, marriage and household groupings*. He made it clear, that households are not at all primitive institutions, as it also involves a certain degree of farming as well (e.g. cultivation of the soil), that were mostly organized and lead by women. Nevertheless, he strongly exclaimed against the fiction of matriarchy, accepting patriarchy as the only fundamental order:²⁴

„Although the grouping of mother and children must be regarded as (in the present sense) the most primitive sort of family, it does not mean – Indeed, it is unimaginable – that there ever were societies with maternal groupings only. (...) The prerequisites of a legitimate marriage, the classes of persons not allowed to enter into stable relationships with each other, the kinds of permission and kinds of kinship or other connections required for their validity, the usages which must be observed – all these matters are regulated by the 'sacred' traditions and the laws of those groups”.

One form for female independence during the era of classic patriarchy was, when the father got away from their home or died, his powers were completely inherited by the new leader, with full authority over the subordinates as well. Weber noted, that some mothers tried to establish independent authority for themselves, because: *„woman's function as the oldest agent of the basic economy, that is, the continuous provision of food through land cultivation and food processing”.* This fact acknowledges the important and complex feminine skill for becoming the breadwinner of the family and the organizer of the 'oikos' life, thus recognizing the existence of feminine independence in contemporary

23 For instance, the term „foster siblings” stand not only for children sharing the same breastfeeding mother, but all children that one family takes care of as an economical unit. See as above.

24 Weber, as above, 100.

societies. This notion also appeared in later works analyzing medieval societies. Weber:²⁵

„The almost complete separation of the husband's and wife's men's and belongings, which was very frequent especially where social differentiation was low – seems to point in this direction, as does the occasional custom according – to which man and wife were seated back to back during their meals or even took their meals separately, and the fact that within the political group there existed independent organizations of women with female chieftains alongside the men's organizations”.

Weber explained the reel of pure patriarchy by the establishment of the patrimonial order, that:

„At first it is only a decentralization of the household when the lord sets dependents (including young men regarded as family members) on plots within his extended land-holdings, with a house and family of their own, and provides them with animals (therefore: peculium) and equipment...”²⁶

Weber referred to the relationship of the dominant and the subordinate as a universal term, where the dominants are always men, whereas subordinates can be men and women. However, there is one more level of subjection – as in the antiquity – that is the group of subordinates to the subordinated men: women, who are thus by nature excluded from power (multiplied subordination). Though it was not focusing exclusively on the relationship between men and women, Weber's androcentric definition of power is indeed showing similarities with the boundaries defined by male-female correlations due to its universality and practicality. Whether it is patriarchy or patrimonial order, it is indifferent from the aspects of power and dominance in the fields of politics, economy or the private sector.

Community and Civil Society

With the description of the organizational forms of communities and modern societies, Ferdinand Tönnies also represented the phallogocentric aspect. His work, *Community and Society*, discussed functional differences of modern and former capitalism and pre- and modern capitalist societies. Per his thesis, though communities function organically, modern societies were artificially created by people. To understand the reference to present topic,

we must realize that introverted communities that he considered inferior, were identified with feminine features, while superior, extroverted societies were given masculine virtues:²⁷

„All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or for worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land”.

Tönnies defined a fundamental social order, summarizing the differences between intelligence or will (*Wesenwille*) and the free will (*Willkürre* or *Kürwille*) in an opposition chart. Intelligence: psychological equivalent of the human body, in other words, the mind itself (e.g. Scientific and the artistic mind). Its forms are always more active and efficient than those of free will, as these belong to life (motives). Feminine forms of will are: preferences, habits, memories. Tönnies:²⁸

„The individual attains to complete mature existence, like the organism which he or she represents, by constant imperceptible growth and development from an embryo containing the determining factors (intellectual as well as physical) created by the union of cells from both parents”.

Tönnies defined free will as individual formation following clear goals and possessing a distinctive subject. The constant urge for decision-making results in abstract agreements, where every new interaction is, to a certain extent, a new agreement. This behavioral mechanism complies with the traditional „masculine” forms of will, according to Tönnies, as the fulfilment of these requires such pure masculine virtues as foresight and conspiratorial skills. As a conclusion, the more the future has the key to success, the more the man needs to lead, direct and act with foresight. The passive, sedentary woman is incapable of such virtues. Tönnies:²⁹

„Now although activity of the intellect is certainly not the same as 'thought', it is none the less a preparation for it, wherever an intellectual activity can be carried out independently of transient impulses and reflex reactions. This may happen wherever the intellect uses its own resources to supplement the effects of received impressions”.

27 Tönnies 2004:9.

28 Tönnies, same as above: 99.

29 Tönnies, same as above: 160-163.

25 Weber, as above.

26 Weber, as above, 106.

Although above thoughts were not created as analysis of masculine and feminine features, the artificial distinction between the skills, opportunities and tasks of the sexes are clearly apparent. Tönnies later (similarly to Kant and many other public thinkers) slightly rehabilitated feminine virtues as well:³⁰

„...although the male is seen as having the advantage in ‘prudence’ or ‘cleverness’, yet this is by no means the same as overall intellectual power. Where this power is creative and synthesizing, the female mind is more likely to excel”.

The differentiation between traditional and modern societies as described by Tönnies supported the androcentric way of thinking and defined its directions. As fundamental element of the society’s development, the individuals’ behavior towards the others is clearly a result of their own interests, and the activity of *taking efforts for a certain goal* is impossible without the obedience of the subordinate group. Tönnies defines value as behavior in accordance with masculine virtues, in other words, activities that enable people to follow their designated roles. Qualities and characteristics for this are possessed by men, and are against traditional feminine values.

Ethics and Society

Georg Simmel and Michael Foucault, two leading figures of modernity and postmodern also discussed the constructive forces that formed society, especially power specifications. Though the two thinkers did not share ideas and lived in different eras, they both agreed that the subordination of women must be stopped. In his essay on filtration, he makes a distinction between female and male behavior and psychology, especially highlighting the dilemmas of masculine possession/non-possession and feminine devotion/refusal. Femininity in his views is defined as:³¹

„It is most likely inaccurate to see this ‘undifferentiatedness’ as mere infirmity or flaw, as this is exactly the fundamental virtue of women, that is not only a positive and independent notion, but also coequals to the ‘differentiatedness’ of men. (...) Not mentioning the fact, that all these verbal and nonverbal forms that our culture offers to express intimate communion, were

actually created by men, thus it is inevitable that these serve fundamental male virtues and needs”.

Simmel analyzed the sexual games of men and women (e.g. blarney), where the man acts either as initiator or as refused suitor, and the woman appears in a flirtatious, inviting role. The analysis asked if these roles are original, learnt and/or interchangeable between the sexes. In another study „Relative and the Absolute in the Problem of the Sexes”, Simmel took a more radical approach:³²

„The performance, feelings and formations of male and female beings are measured upon the defined norms of their values; these norms are; however, not at all neutral, they are not superior to gender oppositions, but are fundamentally male norms. (...) Everything that is masculine will, in this sense, considered as absolutely objective and authoritative, and not only empirically: as masculinity, and the thus appearing male ideas and ideal requirements will also become absolutes. This will have lethal consequences on the appreciation of women”.

Decades later, the postmodern thinker, Michael Foucault followed a similar path when talking about male-originated principles, as did Aristotle and Plato as well.³³ Foucault justified the usage of antique resources by saying: *„the issue of returning to our own inner self has never been as dominant as it was in the antique or roman era”.*³⁴ Following the footsteps of antique philosophers he examined the question of gender relations. He realized that gender and power had a rather hierarchic relationship in the Greek democracy, with the women being subordinate to men. When discussing the necessity of self-formation, Foucault hardly made any distinctions between men and women; however, the deeper analysis of gender relations revealed his ethical, male-oriented approach:³⁵

„In this male-morality as defined by men, the development of human as moral being means that the individual is working on the establishment of a masculine structure. Being a man, he can control and lead the masculine sexual activities he practices with others. This is what he should work on, competing with himself, against his own desires, to reach the point when his relationship towards himself will resemble the hi-

32 Simmel represents here a perfect model of everything that later the feminist critique marked as androcentism. Simmel 1911:45.

33 Foucault 2001/III:26-28.

34 See Foucault, same as above.

35 Foucault 1976/84: II. 89, 27, 187.

30 Tönnies, same as above:163.

31 Simmel 1909:20.

erarchy, power relation and prestige that he, as a male and as free man, practices against his subordinates. (...) [In male-morality...] women appear as objects, or maybe as partners that need teaching, discipline and control, provided they live as subordinates to the man who defines morality. If they belong to some other man (father, husband, guardian) it is wiser to keep ourselves away from them”.

Foucault emphasized the importance of sexuality and its analysis in social functionality and discourse, that modern societies do not want to keep sexuality in some sort of mysticism, but it must be talked about all the time, as if it was a mystery, the great mystery itself.³⁶ Power was a sexual efficacy, and sexuality was in itself a sort of power in his views. He gave detailed description of the ability to rule and of dominance, proving it with the ability to control sexual power and with the choice of the posture during sexual intercourse. Similarly to Aristotle, he discussed the love between men and boys, raising the issue of how the passive party can in such cases maintain his own, healthy masculine dominance.

Foucault also investigated the philosophical question of identity and the forming of the self, that he translates as: *we are ourselves*. He believes that the development of the self and of the present is not possible without the past, or more precisely, without the historical origin, or its synthetization or reconsideration.³⁷ Above ideas generate the question: can a woman be herself, and to what extent can she practice the art of existence? The answer derives here from another question, that is: What role did women play in the definition of human according to the ideas that Foucault, his progenitors and his contemporaries created? If Foucault was serious to believe that the existence of humanity should not be examined from the aspects of power, knowledge and the technical circumstances of ethics only, but also as an art and style of existence itself, then women must have equal importance as men.³⁸

Foucault's views were many times opposed many times by feminists even if they otherwise were positively biased with his thoughts (e.g. Judith Butler, who followed and continued to work with Foucault's ideas, though she disagreed with him in many issues), especially when he was com-

paring the relations of hetero- and homosexuality.³⁹ According to their criticism, Foucault started with the androcentric axiom of female subordination by Aristotle (see dichotomies like active-passive; superiority-inferiority, female versatility-male identity, valuable-worthless). On the other hand, he was accused of being an essentialist, and had to explain how he could publish such thoughts while he considered the duty of modern philosophy to be critical, as it should point out „how and from what point can thinking be reformed”.⁴⁰

Public thinkers many times express their belief, that their mission is to reform society, that would hardly be possible without theories and ethical guidance. Virtues in philosophical sense are in all eras rather complex notions, that are not only compulsory for women, and that regularly appear in the fundamentals and functionalities of societies. With their modernized content; however, these should be applicable for both sexes equally, for, as Spinoza wrote, that virtues make the person, regardless of sex, appropriate and outstanding.⁴¹

New-Old Stereotypes

In 1998, André Comte-Sponville examined all-time virtues based on modern values, considering the main female-male stereotypes as well. His work is a mirror to all contemporary gender stereotype drafts, signaling the almost complete lack of improvement among men regarding the appreciation of women and the requirements towards them. The introduction was referring to Aristotle (and later to Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche, Hume, Weber, Freud, Foucault, etc...):⁴²

„Virtue, as most people say since Aristotle, is an acquired skill to do the right things. But we have to say more than that: virtue is the good itself; in our minds and in reality as well. Not The Absolute Good, and not The Obvious Good, that would be enough to know

39 See also queer-theory: Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Butler.

40 Foucault 2001: II/13-14.

41 Spinoza: „By virtue (virtus) and power I mean the same thing; that is (III:VII), virtue, in so far as it is referred to man, is a man's nature or essence, in so far as it has the power of effecting what can only be understood by the laws of that nature.” Ethics IV, definition 8. 1979:258.

42 Comte-Sponville 1998:7.

36 Foucault 2001/I:38.

37 Foucault 2001/III:266.

38 Foucault 1998:188.

to be able to apply. We should not be thinking about what is right, we should do it”.

Comte-Sponville based his theories on the traditional division of gender hierarchy. Most important virtues were the ones that even public thinking considered to have equal importance: *manners; loyalty; wise providence; temperance; courage; justice; generosity; compassion; clemency; gratitude; submission; simplicity; patience; purity; kindness; sincerity; humor; love*. He realized that traditional thinking trivially ordered which virtues belong to the purely masculine or the purely feminine stereotypes. Narratives list *manners, wise providence, courage, justice, generosity* and *humor* as male, *where as loyalty, compassion, clemency, gratitude, submission, patience, purity, and kindness* as female virtues. The ones that are absent from these lists – *temperance, simplicity, sincerity, love* – became shared values for both sexes, mostly as a result of religious teachings. Per Comte-Sponville, the so called general virtues seem to belong to the feminine attributes, where morality should be a fundamental feature, or even a requirement for women, without any further explanation, so defining the position and role of the female gender.

In Summum

The investigation of the questions gender relations raise showed, that several significant antique and contemporary thinkers followed Aristotle's path. Historical authors or definitive figures of philosophy rarely discussed the position of women in their books or during their public discourses.

According to patriarchal ideas, the terminology of men only referred to males, previous matriarchal societies were almost totally neglected and ignored.

Theories of Tönnies, Weber, Comte-Sponville, or even Foucault supported the masculine approach by the descriptive presentation of gender roles. Their statements were based on historical-philosophical concept of the interpretation of rationalism and on the reformation society, however, their discourses never considered feminine institutions and their terminologies.

Modern rationalization was also built upon the patriarchal gender hierarchy – letting the later arousing emancipation become a minor module only.

Now we arrived to a valid state-organizational dilemma: can modern democracy base female

equality and rights on an ancient structure, where the group that constituted the other half of society, women, were unable to equally represent themselves and their rights in public life?

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